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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Sixty-second session

Summary record of the sixty-first meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 26 September 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Bras Gomes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation (*continued*) (E/C.12/RUS/6; E/C.12/RUS/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that he fully expected that the provisions of the Covenant would be implemented in the State party as a natural part of improving its legislation. Although there were no precise statistics for the number of persons employed in the informal sector, it was estimated to be around 14 million. That was a cause for concern, and the Government and authorities in the regions were taking preventive measures, such as identifying workers who did not have a legal employment contract. They had managed to bring 5 million workers into the formal sector over the previous two years, but there were no guarantees that some of those persons would not drift back into the illegal economy. The authorities were testing a system of exemption from tax and social security payments for two years for nannies, domestic workers and tutors and would assess its effect on the formal sector. The President had issued instructions in early 2016 to reduce the administrative obstacles to informal workers acquiring legal status and meeting tax requirements and to facilitate registration by self-employed persons, define their legal status and reduce their tax burden.

3. With regard to the gender gap in wages, it should be noted that legislation did not allow employers to pay women less than men for the same work; the issue was that women worked overwhelmingly in education, health care, culture and other sectors where wages were low. Furthermore, women generally took time out of paid employment to care for their children and, while they received benefits and could work part-time during such periods, that also had an impact on their salaries. Under a 2012 presidential decree, wages in the sectors concerned were gradually being raised, bringing average women's wages up from 64 per cent of those of men in 2011 to 73 per cent in 2015. It was hoped that near parity would be achieved by 2018.

4. Arrears in salary payments were still a priority issue for the Government, and non-payment was now categorized as an administrative offence. If payment was more than 15 days late, workers had the legal right to stop working but continue to be paid. The Federal Service for Labour and Employment was empowered to investigate cases without requesting authorization from a prosecutor and could do so within one year of the events, rather than only three months as in the past. Some positive results had been achieved, with the number of persons affected halved over the previous five years.

5. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Office of the Prosecutor General had examined the cases brought claiming discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in respect of employment rights and had found that no violation had occurred in any of them. Most of the cases concerned persons working in education and thus with children, in which sector, pursuant to the Labour Code, the commission of an immoral offence was considered to be grounds for dismissal, since it was not compatible with the function of educating children.

6. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that strikes were considered a last resort in the case of a labour conflict and were governed by clear legal procedure. However, there were some categories of workers, such as the military and the law enforcement services, who were prohibited from striking and specific situations, such as emergencies, in which strikes were not allowed. The issue that had been raised was that the ban on strikes also covered persons, such as air traffic controllers and pilots, who did not work directly for the State but whose functions were nevertheless vital to the life of the country and security of its citizens. The Government had no plans to change that legislation.

7. Regarding possible discrepancies between the rights of men and women to social security, the main one concerned the age of retirement, which was 55 years for women and 60 years for men — among the lowest in Europe. There had been discussions recently on the controversial question of raising the retirement age, but that was not limited to either sex. It was to be noted that retirement was not mandatory and many individuals worked for another 10 years. If women took time out from their careers to look after their children, the State paid their pension contributions during that period, so their pension rights were not negatively affected.

8. Traditional family values were a core belief in the Russian Federation. The Government's policy on families guaranteed the right to care for one's children and other benefits to encourage parents to do so, including help in setting up family businesses and special provision for entering higher education. A monthly allowance, now equal to 40 per cent of their salary, was payable for up to 18 months to women who were not working in order to care for their children. Other benefits were paid to help improve living conditions and pay for children's education, and they were included in women's pension calculations. Additional incentives for the birth of third and subsequent children were given in certain regions with low birth rates.

9. Eighteen years was the minimum age for marriage in the State party, although the authorities could grant exceptions from the age of 16, on request, for reasons such as pregnancy or emancipation, for instance if the young person was in employment. However, the Russian Federation was a multi-ethnic country and different traditions meant that such exceptions could be granted from the age of 14 in some republics and autonomous regions.

10. Information on provision for persons with disabilities in special educational institutions would be presented to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when the initial report of the Russian Federation was considered at its nineteenth session in February 2018.

11. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that the 2016 legislation that made domestic violence an administrative offence had become an instrument for countering such violence. In the first half of 2017, over 105,000 such offences had been stopped. If a perpetrator offended again within one year, the case would be prosecuted under criminal law. Special centres had been set up to offer social and psychosocial assistance to victims of domestic violence, who could obtain the necessary information from various sources, such as the police officers dealing with the case. The Civil Code made provision for victims to claim compensation, with the final amount to be decided by the court, taking account of the circumstances surrounding the offence.

12. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that the issues of drug dependency and HIV infection were closely linked. The Government took a comprehensive approach to the problem of drug dependency that was in keeping with the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, under which the use of methadone was prohibited, including for substitution therapy. The Government focused on reducing the demand for drugs and had set up a network of regional centres to provide support to drug-dependent persons. The State strategy for the prevention of the spread of HIV in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 and beyond, which had been adopted in 2016, was targeted at key groups and made provision for the expansion of HIV testing programmes. In 2016, 32 million people had been tested for HIV, including 2 million foreign nationals. The Government allocated an annual budget of 22 billion roubles to the procurement of medication for people living with HIV. The federal databases that had been created to keep track of the number of people living with HIV, tuberculosis or hepatitis would allow for the creation of personalized treatment plans. The Government produced its own antiretroviral drugs and also ran an import substitution programme. In 2016, changes had been made to the way in which statistics on HIV infections were recorded, with the result that in contrast to the previous annual average increase of 10 per cent, the 2016 statistics appeared to show a drop in infections of 19 per cent. It was hoped that the new databases would facilitate the identification of the exact numbers of people requiring treatment for HIV infection.

13. Foreign nationals in the Russian Federation were required to have a valid health insurance policy. If they were working in the country, it was their employer's responsibility

to determine whether or not they had such a policy. All foreign nationals received emergency medical care free of charge. Specific legislation was in place that determined the levels of medical assistance to which refugees were entitled.

14. **Ms. Khvan** (Russian Federation) said that, since the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol had become part of the Russian Federation following a referendum on 16 March 2014, residents there enjoyed the same fundamental rights and freedoms, including those set out in the Covenant, as their counterparts in other parts of the country. The Federal Government did not accept politically motivated resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions 68/262 and 71/205, which had been adopted by vote.

15. **Ms. Trimchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the website of the Ministry of Education and Science for the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol contained information pertaining to the use of state languages in that part of the country, where 20,000 children in 52 schools were taught in Crimean Tatar and 13,000 children in 13 schools were taught in Ukrainian. At the beginning of each school year, parents chose the language in which they wished their children to receive their education. A bill related to the use of languages had been passed on its first reading by the State Council of Crimea and would be the subject of a consultation process involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of ethnic minorities and education sector workers. Every piece of legislation that was adopted would be published in all the state languages of the Republic of Crimea. All ethnic and religious minorities present in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, including Crimean Tatars and Muslims, were represented in the political process. Work had begun on the establishment of regional autonomy in line with Russian legislation.

16. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that 289 camps had been set up in Crimea in 2015 to house deported citizens. In 2014, the Government had adopted a targeted social and economic development programme aimed at integrating the economies of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into that of the Russian Federation. With a view to encouraging inter-ethnic concord, more than 100 projects, including the construction of housing and schools and the development of water and sanitation facilities, had been implemented to facilitate the return of repressed peoples to their traditional homelands in Crimea.

17. **Mr. Kolbanov** (Russian Federation) said that almost no one in the Russian Federation had a daily income of less than US$ 1.90, and only 0.3 per cent of the population earned less than US$ 3.00 per day. While a network of 134 institutions around the country provided support to 90,000 homeless persons each year, unofficial estimates put the actual number of homeless people at around double that figure. Following the drop in world oil prices in 2015 and 2016, there had been an increase in the number of people whose income was below the minimum subsistence level. Despite the Government's efforts to mitigate the effects of outside factors, budget restrictions had hit pensioners especially hard. To counter that impact, in 2015 the usual practice of indexing pensions in line with inflation had been temporarily suspended for working pensioners. The recent increases in the rates of ownership of consumer goods such as televisions and mobile phones appeared to reflect the fact that the population in general had successfully navigated the difficulties caused by higher prices.

18. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said the rental market in the Russian Federation was small, given that 90 per cent of homes in the Russian Federation were privately owned. Citizens with low incomes, including pensioners, could access subsidized communal housing.

19. **Mr. Nesterkin** (Russian Federation) said that illegal construction activity had occurred in some Roma communities. To ensure people's safety, judicial rulings had been issued ordering the removal of illegal settlements. The authorities engaged in consultations with Roma communities on the drafting of landownership documents and were working to improve the transport and health-care infrastructure in the areas where those communities lived.

20. Kaliningrad was home to a 1,500-strong Roma community where 170 Roma children attended school. Information on how to access social benefits and medical

assistance had been made freely available on the website of a non-profit organization based in Kaluzhskaya province. The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs had developed a comprehensive plan on social, economic and ethnocultural development for Roma communities for the period 2017-2019, with the aim of countering stereotypes.

21. **Mr. [illegible]**, noting the amendments that had been made to the Land Code in 2015, said that he would like to learn about the legal safeguards that were in place to ensure that the broad powers afforded to the federal authorities to confiscate land were not abused, including how those safeguards took into account the Committee's general comments Nos. 4 and 7 on the right to adequate housing. It would be helpful to hear about the measures that were in place to guarantee that people were not left homeless following the demolition of their homes for the purpose of development projects. Clarification would be welcome on whether legally constructed houses could be demolished to make way for roads or sports facilities.

22. The Committee would be grateful for details of the advantages that were denied to same-sex couples as a result of the prohibition on same-sex marriage.

23. In the light of reports that quotas and restrictions had been imposed on fishing activities carried out by indigenous peoples, he asked how the Government ensured that such peoples could feed themselves in accordance with their traditions.

24. **Ms. [illegible]**, noting the extremely high abortion rate in the State party, said that she wished to know what steps the authorities were taking or intended to take towards the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health in school curricula.

25. **Mr. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to know whether the Government intended to decriminalize sex workers.

26. It would be interesting to hear about any plans to introduce a quick, transparent and accessible procedure through which transgender persons could obtain legal gender recognition.

27. In connection with drug substitution therapies, it was his understanding that the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 did not prohibit the use of methadone in the treatment of drug-dependent persons. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on whether the Government would reconsider its policy on harm reduction measures, including the provision of syringes.

28. **Ms. [illegible]** said that there was a need to combat the stereotypes that were prevalent in the State party in relation to the role of men and women in society. The exclusion of women from certain professions, the absence of a quota for the participation of women in public life, and the unequal retirement age that was in force for men and women were incompatible with the provisions of the Covenant.

29. **Ms. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome information on the situation of street children and on any investigations into acts of violence committed against people living in institutions. It was unclear whether the legal minimum age for marriage was stipulated in the Family Code. In connection with the conversion of domestic violence into an administrative offence, it would be helpful to hear details of the bodies that were responsible for settling administrative disputes.

30. **Mr. [illegible]** said that it was his understanding that in some areas of the State party, marriage could be entered into at the age of 14 years. He would appreciate the delegation's comments on what would be done to bring the legal minimum age for marriage into line with international standards.

31. **Ms. [illegible]** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome details of the steps that were being taken to investigate allegations of the punitive burning of homes in Chechnya since 2014 and to prosecute any perpetrators of such offences and compensate any families affected.

32. It was her understanding that the restrictions in force in the State party in relation to the use of opiate-based medication, including morphine, made it difficult for persons with a

terminal illness to obtain pain relief. She would be grateful for information on any measures the Government intended to take to provide appropriate palliative care for those persons.

33. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the legal minimum age for marriage was 18 years, as set out in the Family Code. Exemptions were sometimes made but did not cause any problems.

34. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that when a complaint of domestic violence was received, the police determined whether an offence had been committed and subsequently passed the case to the court, where it was heard by a federal judge.

35. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that in the Russian Federation, abortion was only one of the methods of contraception available and was permitted at up to 22 weeks' gestation. As part of the humane process that was followed in his country, women who requested an abortion were shown an image of their fetus to ensure that they were comfortable with their decision.

36. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that the number of abortions carried out annually had dropped from 935,000 in 2012 to 688,000 in 2016. A network of reproductive health centres provided advice on abortions and contraception.

37. In 2016, the Government had set up a network of palliative care units for persons with a terminal illness. A road map had been adopted to facilitate access to pain-relief medication via electronic prescriptions.

38. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that substitution therapies for drug-dependent persons simply constituted another form of drug abuse. The statistics available showed that the three-tiered comprehensive system in place to reduce dependence on drugs was the most effective method of tackling the problem.

39. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had investigated the reports of houses being burned down in the village of Yandi in the Chechen Republic. The investigators had been told by neighbours that the owners of the houses had left the village of their own volition after destroying their homes because they were in a poor condition. A forensic examination of earth samples had not identified arson as the cause, and the prosecutor had decided not to institute criminal proceedings.

40. A federal law had been adopted to prevent child homelessness and criminal activity by minors, establishing the scope of preventive activities and the individuals who might be subjected to them. Further measures included the opening of social rehabilitation centres and the launch of a hotline, so that children in difficult living conditions could seek assistance and advice from specialized services. To address child homelessness as a result of orphanhood, the Government had put in place measures to improve the health of families, including the payment of social assistance and benefits. While a recent survey had identified 57,000 children who were not in their parents' care, those children were not necessarily street children. In that sense, she believed that the seriousness of the problem might have been overstated.

41. **Ms. Gabbasova** (Russian Federation) said that although there was no syringe programme in the Russian Federation, there was no prohibition on their use, and in fact they were distributed by not-for-profit organizations that worked with groups such as persons living with HIV and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, despite the international efforts that had been deployed for a number of years, rates of HIV infection and AIDS remained high among drug users. In that context, the Government would examine the recommendations of the World Health Organization and other international bodies before deciding on legislative priorities.

42. **Ms. Gurzhieva** (Russian Federation) said that while same-sex marriage was prohibited in the Russian Federation, there was nothing to prevent individuals from making civil arrangements.

43. **Ms. Rodionova** (Russian Federation) said that the provision of sexual services contributed to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and undermined morality and traditional social norms, among other negative consequences. Therefore the Government could not shirk its responsibility to counter such activities.

44. **Mr. Druchinin** (Russian Federation) said that the Government ensured respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, including hunting rights. Cultural and territorial rights were regulated by a number of federal laws, including Federal Act No. 209 of 24 July 2009 on Hunting and the Preservation of Hunting Resources, which took account of the traditional lifestyles and economic activities of the indigenous peoples of the north, Siberia and the far east and ensured their access to hunting resources. The Government also provided financial support to fisheries, and the Russian Federation was an active member of the International Whaling Commission.

45. **Mr. Uprimny** said that the Russian Federation had achieved good outcomes in terms of access, quality and public spending in the sphere of education, and its constitutional guarantee of free universal preschool education was commendable. Nevertheless, the Committee was concerned about certain aspects of education for specific populations. A World Bank study had found that preschool enrolment was almost 30 per cent higher in urban areas than in rural ones, while even greater disparities existed between different regions and territories. He wished to know what concrete steps the Government was taking to overcome regional and urban-rural disparities in access to education.

46. The State party had an adequate legislative framework for the protection of persons with disabilities and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; however, in practice it had failed to implement the concept of reasonable accommodation for such persons. Furthermore, a report by Human Rights Watch documented many barriers preventing their access to quality education. He would therefore appreciate details of steps taken to ensure that persons with disabilities had access to good-quality, inclusive education, as well as confirmation of the number and proportion of children with disabilities under the age of 18 years who were in education, since the figures provided in the replies to the list of issues and annex 7 thereto were unclear.

47. Practical forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals remained a concern. Problems such as bullying had been aggravated by Federal Act No. 135, known as the "gay propaganda" law, which made it illegal to equate heterosexual and homosexual relationships and seemed to legitimize discrimination. Accordingly, he requested information on measures to ensure non-discriminatory access to education for LGBT persons, including the possible repeal of Federal Act No. 135.

48. Access to education continued to be a problem for asylum-seeking and refugee children. Although the Supreme Court had ruled that non-registration could not be used as grounds for non-admission, that ruling did not seem to have been fully implemented; he therefore wondered how the Government might bring its administrative practices into line with the ruling. He also wished to know what steps would be taken to eliminate segregation and discrimination against Roma, given that NGOs had reported that Roma schools offered poor quality education and that Roma parents only agreed to send their children there because they feared greater discrimination in ordinary schools.

49. In the sphere of cultural rights, the Committee would appreciate more details about efforts to protect minority languages, especially the 50 languages thought to be in danger of extinction. Languages seemed to be in less danger of becoming extinct when the indigenous peoples that spoke them enjoyed land rights and other protections; in that context, he asked whether the State party intended to strengthen and expand nomadic schools and other programmes to safeguard the traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples.

50. Lastly, he said that although Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar were legally recognized as the official languages of the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea, civil society organizations had raised concerns over restrictions on expressions of cultural identity by the Tatar and Ukrainian communities, the closure of Ukrainian cultural institutions, and the lack of teaching in Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian. What concrete measures had been taken in Crimea to ensure cultural rights and the right to study in one's native language?

51. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that between 2011 and 2013, the Government had implemented a 120 billion rouble project to modernize establishments and improve the quality of education services, which had particularly targeted rural schools. A federal education programme for the period 2015-2019 was being implemented to build

schools in new locations where demand was highest. The Government was in the process of abolishing the three-shift system, so that in future rural schools would only have two shifts. During the period 2013-2020, rural schools would receive funding as part of a programme for the development and modernization of sports facilities. A further programme was being implemented to encourage scientists and other graduates to take up permanent jobs in rural schools. The procedural requirements for the closure of rural schools had been tightened.

52. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government had legislated to ensure barrier-free access to all establishments for persons with disabilities. In that context, Federal Act No. 273 on Education in the Russian Federation had been amended to incorporate a special article on inclusive education for persons with disabilities, while the Ministry of Education and Science had prepared recommendations on working with persons with disabilities for all institutions. New educational centres were subject to rigorous building regulations that stipulated the infrastructure requirements for persons with disabilities; accessibility issues in older buildings were addressed under a phased plan that envisaged adaptation measures such as the installation of ramps.

53. **Mr. Kolbanov** (Russian Federation) said that the Government was taking steps to boost the birth rate. One important measure was to provide women with greater opportunities to combine retraining with bringing up children. Mothers who were not inclined to return to work would be given access to premises where they could set up nurseries for their children and the children of friends and relatives. Another component would be the introduction of certified childminders, who would be registered as self-employed and who would have to meet certain requirements and professional standards. The Government aimed to launch its preschool education programme within three to five years.

54. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that, in 2016, the Government had endorsed a comprehensive plan of action to ensure access to vocational training for persons with disabilities. Federal standards laid down the conditions that were to be provided so that persons with disabilities could access higher education, including the option of distance learning, the selection of teaching locations based on the student's health status, adaptation measures and the extension of periods of study, if so required. To evaluate universities' ability to provide education to persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Science had developed a system of 45 indicators, such as whether the university provided an obstacle-free environment, special technical resources, a tailored education framework and assistance in finding work. The Ministry had also launched a website that provided persons with disabilities with exhaustive information about education opportunities.

55. Federal educational standards were applied throughout the Russian Federation, so that children from the eighth to the eleventh grades studied courses on anatomy, biology and the basics of healthy lifestyles. Local regulations also allowed schools to teach students about subjects such as preventing HIV/AIDS, preventing adolescent pregnancy, contraception and body changes during young adulthood.

56. **Ms. Zaitseva** (Russian Federation) said that citizens of non-traditional sexual orientations were not discriminated against, and that all citizens were equal and enjoyed the right to education. Children enjoyed special protection with a view to their moral and spiritual development. Federal Act No. 436 on the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development had been adopted in the light of children's vulnerability to the development of new information and communications technologies and the negative impact of certain online content. The Act conformed to international norms, including articles 13, 17 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommendations Nos. R (89) 7 and R (97) 19 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which required States parties to protect children from materials harmful to their well-being.

57. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that, in response to the criticism of Federal Act No. 135, he wished to echo the words of the President of the Russian Federation, who had stated that the State party's traditions and culture should be respected, just as the Russian Federation respected the traditions and cultures of other countries.

58. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that refugees enjoyed preferential treatment in terms of being able to access educational establishments. For example, they were allowed to enrol in secondary education upon completion of a single State examination, which they could resit on several occasions. Although the Ministry of Education and Science routinely contacted the education authorities of refugees' country of origin to verify their schooling and qualifications, the lack of a response did not prevent them from being admitted to Russian educational establishments.

59. **Mr. Sirenkii** (Russian Federation) said that over 200 languages were spoken in the Russian Federation and 73 languages were taught as subjects in schools. The number of indigenous languages used as the language of instruction stood at 25, having risen from 17 in 2005. With the support of universities, over 1,500 indigenous-language titles had been published during the previous 10 years.

60. The nomadic schools project had been implemented in six regions and was already yielding positive results. It was based on the principle that children could receive education while living with their parents, without interruption, and thus maintain their traditional way of life. At the preschool level, the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs had implemented the "Children of the Arctic" project, which had been well received.

61. On the question of Roma education, it was clear that the parents of Roma children did not send them to preschool or kindergarten. That situation led to problems of social adaptation, notably by limiting their ability to speak Russian by the time they reached school age. Notwithstanding the existence of initiatives that sought to help Roma children adapt to Russian schools, it was extremely difficult for children who did not speak Russian well to meet the entry requirements for the first grade. The Roma schools mentioned by the Committee member were not a segregation measure but represented a genuine attempt to help Roma children to adapt to Russian society.

62. **Ms. Trinchenko** (Russian Federation) said that in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, education continued to be provided in the Tatar and Ukrainian languages in accordance with the wishes of the parents of children or their legitimate representatives. Although the vast majority of schools taught in Russian, there were 52 schools in which the main language of tuition was Tatar and 13 schools in which it was Ukrainian; Tatar was being studied by 20,000 individuals and Ukrainian by 13,000 children. There had been no official complaints from parents about the unavailability of tuition in those languages.

63. **Mr. Windfuhr** (Country Task Force) said that he was grateful for the frank and constructive dialogue, which had enhanced the Committee's understanding of the State party's approach to certain issues and its setting of priorities and limits.

64. **The Chair** said she wished to remind the delegation that the Committee's concluding observations were intended to provide useful guidance for the protection of human rights on the ground, and she hoped that the State party would accept them in that spirit.

65. **Mr. Cherkasov** (Russian Federation) said that the dialogue had been highly informative and had allowed the delegation to comprehensively address a wide variety of topics. The Russian Federation was willing to associate itself with international instruments and to implement them with a view to improving the situation in the country. Unlike the approach to economic, social and cultural rights that was followed by European and other States, the path taken by the Russian Federation was conditioned by the vast size of its territory and its many ethnic and linguistic specificities, which meant that the Government was unwilling to impose values that some people considered unacceptable and which might even lead to inter-ethnic tensions. Nevertheless, the Government's actions had been broadly in keeping with the Committee's previous recommendations, and it would study the concluding observations carefully with a view to their practical implementation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.